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ABSTRACT

Although its main focus is on economic collaboration, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has played a very influential role in the exchange of educational ideas and experience on an international level. It also is true that while OECD involves the nations of the European Community, Norway and Sweden have had a disproportionate influence. The principal purposes of this study are to explain how the OECD came to play its influential role in educational policy, and how the exchange of educational ideas and experiences within the organization came to be strongly influenced by the policy thinking and practice of the Nordic countries. (DB)

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INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
"PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT"
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30 YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATION IN THE OECD

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30 YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATION IN THE OECD

The Questions

The key role of the OECD

In the Western world, no international organisation has played a greater role in educational collaboration, exchange of experience and ideas than the OECD. It is somewhat paradoxical that such an organisation, with its main national connections in the ministries of finance, and its emphasis on economic collaboration, should achieve such a position in the field of education policy. In terms of their mandates, such organisations as the UNESCO and the Council of Europe should have been much closer to fullfilling such an international role.

Furthermore, it seems to be generally recognized that in the educational activities of the OECD, the Nordic countries may have had a disproportionate influence. Historically, various great powers had been "leading" in the development of ideas and practice in the education field - France and Germany in the late 19th century, and the US in the first half of the 20th century. Through many years the American influence was strong in the UNECSO, while larger Central European countries have played a major role in the work of the Council of Europe on educational matters. In the OECD, however, it seems that the small

Nordic countries, and especially Norway and Sweden, during a long period had something close to a leading role. This is a rather unique fenomenon in educational history.

"The Nordic Model"

Other countries seem to have a fairly clear idea about the existence of a "Nordic Model" for educational policy. The following features are supposed to characterize this model:

Compulsory education is comprehensive, with no organisational differentiation till the age of 16. Upper secondary education also is to a large extent comprehensive, and there are strong efforts to avoid dead ends in the educational system.

Vocational education belongs to the stage after compulsory school. It is mainly school-based, recruits a large proportion of the age group, and is well equipped by international standards. It has a good reputation and recruits well, competing effectively with general education.

There is an extensive system of adult education, to a great extent based on voluntary organisations, but with substantial public support.

Education of equal quality is available to all, which implies a financial redistribution policy securing equal resource standards all over the country. Additional costs due to local conditions are also compensated for. Parents tend to regard the

local school as equivalent to any other, and there is no quality hierarchy between schools.

Schools are mostly small, with possibilities for close contact with the families and the local society. The localisation of schools is consciously used as an element in regional policy, and broader community services by the schools are encouraged. This is especially the case for higher education. Decision-making power in the education sector is fairly decentralised.

The pedagogy is relatively pupil-centred. The teaching profession has a high status and pay compared to other countries, and also strong organisations. Recruitment to the profession is very good, especially for teaching at the lower levels.

All those characteristics are not found to the same extent in all the Nordic countries, and some of them can also be found in other countries. Yet, the model has a certain coherence, and forms an integrated part of more general welfare policies, in which concerns of social policy, regional policy and economic policy are reflected also in policies for education.

The purpose of this study

The prime purpose in the following is to contribute to an explanation of how the OECD came to play its influential role in educational policy, and how the exchange of educational ideas and experiences within the organisation came to be

strongly influenced by the policy thinking and practice of the Nordic countries. The paper is not based on an extensive examination of historical documents, it is more an actor's narrative reflecting impressions and experiences through nearly 30 years of work with the OECD in this field.

The Background

OEEC

The Marshall Aid Programme was not only a generous American contribution to the economic revival of Western Europe. It should also help European governments in their fight against strong communist currents in their electorates. The Americans also wanted to have some control of the ways in which the aid was used. For this purpose, an organisation for economic collaboration between the Western European countries - the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation - OEEC - was established in 1948.

The US was not a member of the organisation, but took a very active part in its work. One of the main requirements was that the Organisation should work for the abolishment of trade barriers, built up in the depression period of the 1930s and during the war. The member governments should also provide detailed reports on the state of their economies. In this context, the new economic instruments developed in the preceding years - the International Standard for National Accounting - came in usefully. Economic planning had proved its efficiency during the war, and it was agreed that the OECD

member countries should prepare economic 4- years plans for examination by the Organisation.

Why education in the OEEC?

Several independent developments contribute to explain that towards the end of the 1950s, the OEEC came to concern itself with education, and also the particular features of the collaboration in this field. The immediate cause was the Sputnik shock - the anxiety created in the US by the Sovjet performance in space, and the belief that this was due to the Russian success in producing highly qualified technical and scientific personnel. It seemed that the educational system of the US had failed, and restoring the assumed imbalance became part of the strategy of the cold war. The Americans immediately brought this new message to their allied in Western Europe.

The economics of education in the US

At the same time, there was an emerging interest among American economists for the economics of education. Partly, this was based on a further development of the research on national accounting, proving that the traditional economic factors - labour, capital and ground - could not explain more than a small part of the actual growth of the national product. Other factors were looked for, and in 1959 the well-known economist Theodor Schultz presented a material indicating that the educational level of a country could be an important factor in this context. His research in this field gave him a Nobel price in economics many years later.

"The New Curriculum"

Other US developments supported this new thinking. The Sputnik shock had provided arguments for strong interest groups in the US devoted to the expansion of technical and scientific research and education. To some extent, their efforts were a reaction against the tradition of "progressive education", which at least at the rhetorical level had dominated US education in the first part of this century. The new trend was to emphasize the scientific disciplines, and primarily in the natural sciences. With strong financial support from the Minstry of Defence, a "new curriculum movement" was created, in which outstanding researchers were invited to prepare new curriculum and teaching materials for all educational levels "on a scientific basis". The ideas rapidly spread to Western Europe.

The economics of education in Western Europe

The American ideas about the economics of education met a well prepared ground in Europe. Already in 1951 I had developed theories on the economics of education corresponding to those Schultz presented in 1959. In the first round, they were rejected as unscientific by the Norwegian top economists. It took years of discussions, especially with the head of the Research Department of the Norwegian Statistic Bureau, Odd Aukrust, before he was convinced by his own national accounting research that an important "third factor" must exist in economic growth, and that education might be an important component of this factor. He presented his research findings simultaneously with Schultz' presentations in the US.

The Norwegian political milieu was, however, somewhat more open for such ideas at an earlier point of time. In the early 1950s, our Minister of Finance accepted that education and research should be given room in the Government's economic long term programme. For a period I was associated to the economic programming of the Norwegian Ministry of Trade, and the first 4-years programme presented to Parliament, covering the period 1954-57, analyzed extensively the importance of education and research for the different sectors of the economy. As far as I know, Norway was the first country including such policy areas in its economic planning.

Studies of the supply and demand for qualified manpower had also been initiated in several Western European countries, and especially the Netherlands and Sweden. As secretary general for the advisory council to the Norwegian government on research policy, I headed the forecasting studies in Norway as from the mid 1950s.

My ideas about economic growth and education were also taken up in a Nordic context. Acting as secretary for the Nordic Cultural Commission, I organised a seminar in 1957 based on my previous research findings. Active participants were the head of the Danish Institute for Social Research, Henning Friis, the head of Danish economic planning, Erik Ib Schmidt, the head of Swedish economic planning, Ingvar Svennilsson, and the leading educational researcher in the

Nordic countries at that time, professor Torsten Husèn. The latter was then engaged in a major research project aiming at the identification of the "educational reserve" in the Swedish society - the intellectual potential among youth which was not utilised by the educational system.

In Germany, professor Friedrich Edding had since long used economic arguments for the expansion of the outdated and highly selective German educational system. His ideas gradually won some support within social democratic circles in Germany.

The ground was prepared

One could thus say that the ground was well prepared in Western Europe, and especially in Norway, when in 1958, the US initiated the creation of a committee for technical and scientific personnel within the OEEC. Its initial name was Governing Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel[1]. Henning Friis became its first chairman, and Ingvar Svennilsson and Torsten Husèn became its most promenent scientific consultants.

The Secretariat

Alexander King, director of the British Department of Scientific and Technical Research, was put in charge of the work within the OEEC secretariat in this field. King was a natural scientist who had played a major role in the British war effort, and through that he had become convinced of the ability of applied and goal oriented research to transform modern society. He belonged to a circle who saw scientists as the key political actors in the future society,

and he wanted the OEEC to promote science and technology, not least through an increased supply of experts in these fields.

King brought with him to Paris the young social scientist James Ronald Gass. He had a different background, raised in a large working class family in Liverpool. An RAF carrier during the war had brought him to university studies. He did not know much about education, but he had an innovative mind, and great ability to pick up new ideas and to sell them.

The initial tasks

CSTP saw as a logical first task to map the stock of technical and scientific manpower in the Western world, and the training capacity in such fields. The theories of the economics of education were followed up through the creation of the Study Group in the Economics of Education, which attracted several outstanding economists from the member countries.

OEEC had a seperate committee for "Technical Cooperation", which developed into a body for support to the economically more backwards of the member countries, especially in the Mediterranean. The Committee had at its disposal means for project support, and initatives from the CSTP soon got hold of a major part of those means. The initiatives were mainly copled to a programme for manpower planning in the Mediterranean countries, with emphasis on qualified technical and scientific personnel, the Mediterranean Regional Project - MRP. In each of the countries, a separate planning group was

established in order to prepare forecasts and propose educational policies to meet assumed future needs.

Another programme took care of the transfer of the "new curriculum" ideas from the US to Western Europe. In 1961, the Cypriot George Papadopoulos was engaged for this work. Papadopoulos had a British education as an historian, and also considerable insight in educational questions. After some years, he came to be Gass' close collaborator and deputy.

To the Science Directorate, headed by King, also belonged a number of projects on collaboration in technical research. After a while they were transferred to a new Science Policy Committee. The same Directorate was also in charge of the collaboration between the national productivity institutes, established through the Marshall aid. As Kings' deputy wihtin the Directorate, Gass was put in charge of the secretariat's work for the CSTP.

My tasks

This was a situation when in the summer 1961, I was invited to take up a new position within in the Science Directorate, probably on the advise of my Nordic friends in CSTP. After discussions with Gass I took over the responsibility for the mapping of scientific and technical personnel and the Study Group in the Economics of Education. I should also explore the possibility of creating a new project in education planning, parallel to the MRP, for the rest of the member countries.[2)]

OECD

At the same time, the OEEC underwent a fundamental change. In actual practice, the Marshall aid period had come to an end, but the need for economic collaboration had been clearly demonstrated. Such collaboration, however, ought to have a wider geographical range, so as to include all Western industrialized countries. In September 1961, the OEEC was transformed into the Organsation for Economic Cooperation and Development - OECD.

The new organisation got an extended mandate, which brought in new fields of collaboration. Special emphasis was put on coordinating member countries' policies towards the third world. Economic stabilization and free trade was no longer the essential aim, more emphasis was put on economic growth. This corresponded to a predominant trend at the time, reflecting the views of fairly radical governments in central member countries, and not least the US. This also corresponded well with ideas held by the Nordic countries.

The membership in the organisation was expanded to include the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Finland also became a regular member, and Yugoslavia obtained after a while status as an associated member. The "OECD countries" were thus largely defined, except for the admission of Japan a decade later.

The OECD in the 1960s

The political breakthrough

At the time of the change from OEEC to OECD, the CSTP had its major political breakthrough. It happend at an international conference in Washington on education and economic growth. The Study group members, and especially Svennilsson and Edding, presented an extensive material on the impact of education on the economy, and the politicians and economic experts present were ready to be convinced. The presentation provided a strong professional legitimation of the expansion of the educational system which from many reasons had occured in most of the member countries, and the political follow-up in the 1960s was remarkable.

Changing the programme-Comparative studies

In the OECD secretariat we worked on the enormous mapping of scientific and technical personnel in the OECD countries. In my view, however, the problem was to narrowly defined, and the study was extended to include all personnel with higher education and technical training. The educational institutions and their capacity was emphasized, so that the survey in fact became a study of higher education in the member countries. The work required most of the time of four of my collaborators during two years. A major problem was the lack of satisfactory international standards for education and manpower statistics. We had to engage in lengthy negotiations with individual countries about the classification of various types of education. It made it possible for us to build up our competence in comparative statistics.

The Study Group

The Study Group in the Economics of Education continued its professional work, and there were no problems in engaging outstanding researchers, such as Tinbergen, Malinvaux, Scitowski and Solow, in this exciting new branch of economics. However, it was gradually revealed that this direction of research had limited possibilites. We worked closely with Denison, who made national comparisons based on macro- economic models. They proved that the level of educational attainment in the population as a factor in economic growth, varied strongly from country to country, and over time in the individual country. We realized that we were facing an interplay between different growth factors which made it difficult to attach a specific degree of importance to each of them.

Parallel to this, there were extensive studies at the micro level, focusing especially on the "rate of return" to education. But the connection between wage differentials and the marginal productivity of work is doubtful, and it also proved difficult to control for the selection within the educational system.

After a while, we concluded that the possibilites of gaining new insights through such studies were limited. However, this has not prevented other bodies, including the World Bank, from using such methods in order to establish criteria for educational donor activities up till this day.

EIP

The really expanding part of our pro-

gramme was the project on educational planning - the Educational Investment Programme - EIP. The old OEEC had considerable means for "operational" activities in member countries, and the Mediterranean project on manpower forecasting was based on an OECD contribution of half the running costs of the national planning teams. The establishment of the OECD led to a major reduction in such operational activities, but we could still offer similar arrangements within the EIP. Ireland and Austria established planning groups based on such support from the OECD, while most countries preferred to finance their planning activities themselves. We saw the latter as an advantage, as it meant a closer integration of the planning activities within the central educational administrations.

Within a couple of years, planning agencies or groups were operational in Great Britain, Belgium, The Netherlands, Western Germany, Denmark and Sweden. France was self- sufficient in this field, but we had close collaboration with the French Planning Ministry.

We established a network consisting of the leaders of the national planning agencies, based on a couple of conferences annually. Gradually, a major part of the research based activities of the OECD secretariat was oriented towards creating a theoretical foundation for the practical planning activities in the member countries.

Conflicts within the organisation

The policy I developed in this case, could not avoid creating conflicts. The OECD is headed by a Council, which in principle consists of the ministers of finance of the member countries. In practice, the national ambassadors to the OECD usually act in their place. It has been said of the OECD Council that it is a playground for the ministers of finance, were they can express strong opinions on every political question, without being disturbed by other ministers with some real knowledge about their respective sectors. The General Secretary to the OECD is responsible towards the Council, and the secretariat is responsible towards the General Secretary. In principle, the many different committees have only an advisory function towards the Secretariat, which determines what shall be brought on to the Council.

Economics and sector politics

The OEEC, and partly also the OECD, was primarily an organisation for economic collaboration. It was quite logical for the Council and the Secretariat to see the more peripherical activities, such as educational collaboration, primarily as supporting activities to the collaboration on economic policy. This means, however, that the Organisation must live with a latent conflict in relation to the sectorial committees, representing national authorities responsible for policies in their sectors, including all the objectives and concerns involved in such policies.

Educational policy became interesting for the OECD because of its assumed importance for economic growth and development.

The planning project in the Mediterranean was clearly based on this. The national groups which were created, had their prime contacts with national economic authorities, and especially newly established planning ministries. Such ministries regularly were in conflict with the ministries of education, which they saw as outdated and uninterested in economic issues. For the OECD, it was easy to get into those countries, because the organisation seemed to legitimate the right of economic authorities to intervene in educational policy. Probably, the OECD secretariat also used available means for technical cooperation as an encouragement to the personal alliances formed in the member countries. The latter thus got the means for implementing their own national pet projects.

The problematic aspect of this way of operating were the consequent national conflicts. They were often sufficient to effectively block planning initatives from the OECD, and to prevent any real impact on educational policies.

Integrated planning

In the EIP, I followed another orientation. The main point was to achieve a real integration of the new planning activities into the national educational administration, and this had to happen on the premises of national educational authorities. In my view, the task of the OECD was not to impose upon member countries a change of educational policies emerging from the specific objectives of the OECD. This political line gradually gained strong support in the CSTP. The Nordic countries agreed

fully, and gradually Great Britain, Western Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Austria joined in. New Zealand was also supportive, and the US was generally benevolent without engaging itself strongly. In most of the Mediterranean countries, the CSTP was not effectively anchored in national educational authorities, and the representatives of those countries were more sceptical. There was, in fact, a fundamental contradiction between the majority in the CSTP, and the OECD as a whole.

Conflicts within the Secretariat

Within the part of the secretariat serving the CSTP, corresponding conflicts emerged. Gass had invested most of the secretariat's resources and his own efforts in the Mediterranean activities. He was worried about the political support which the EIP- programme gradually gained in the CSTP, partly because he was relatively foreign to educational policy making, and partly because it seemed to constitute a threath towards his leadership within the secretariat. I felt the development of the EIP- programme and related professional activities actively resisted by my boss and the part of the secretariat working on his favorite projects.

Norway follows up

In 1965, even Norway decided to establish a department for educational planning, and I was called back to head this unit. This also meant that I became the Norwegian representative to the group of national planners meeting under the EIP-programme. After a while, I became its chairman, as well as Norwegian repre-

sentative to the CSTP.

The EIP- programme

In the OECD secretariat, the EIP- programme was carried on by my closest previous collaborator, the American Beresford Hayward, and together, we developed the policy of the programme further. The Study Group in the Economics of Education became the nucleus in a series of seminars, bringing in experts from a variety of disciplines. Such themes as futures studies, participatory planning, factors behind the demand for education, etc. were taken up, with the assistence of researchers in sosiology, political science, psychology, organisation theory and systems theory.

We also developed further the work on comparative statistics. As the chairman of a working party on Educational Statistics for Planning, I worked closely wiht Claus Moser, the later head of the UK Bureau of Statistics. We developed a model for educational statistics which had a major impact upon the development of national statistics in many countries, and also upon the development within the OECD of regular comparative statistics on education.

The Country Reviews

The OEEC had started a form of examination of the educational policies of the member countries, in accordance with established practices in the field of economic policy. Initially, such examinations consisted of fairly simple descriptions of the educational systems of the member countries, aiming at information exchange. The national educational plans emerging from the EIP- programme

offered, however, a much more solid foundation for reviewing country policies. Reviews became to a great extent focused upon the national plan documents, and offered possibilities for a real examination of the new directions in educational policies in member countries. The assignment as a member of an OECD examination team became quite attractive, and there were no problems in finding outstanding professional or political experts for this function, which greatly enhanced the quality of the reviews. The OECD became a real factor in the national policies of member countries, and the legitimation of such policies through favorable reactions from the OECD, became important for the governments.

Educational policy

The planning activities we initiated, clearly had a political content. The OECD message was firstly that planning is important. Secondly, that education is important for economic and societal development, and that educational policy must be pursued according to such objectives. Educational policy must utilise the potential of the population; it must be offered to as many as possible, and give everyone genuine opportunities. The traditional selection of pupils is unwanted, and "blind alleys" in the educational system must be abolished. "Democratization" of education is a necessary element in an expansive educational planning.

Such political signals were clearly inspired by the educational policy of the Nordic countries. In the UK, the Labour Party had similar views, but the British

educational system is too particular to constitute a model for other countries. In the US, Kennedy's and Johnson's administrations were engaged in their policies for "fair deal" and the fight against poverty, and the US representatives to the OECD were largely favourable towards the political signals from the Organisation. In Belgium and the Netherlands, the OECD signals were used as a starting point for extensive educational reforms, and this was also to some extent the case in Ireland and Austria. In Western Germany, the work of OECD in education was used to legitimate the educational policy of the social democrats, which could be said to be formulated in collaboration with the OECD. Even reform efforts in France, New Zealand and Australia were influenced by the ideas disseminated from the OECD.

The Nordic countries were in a period of strong expansion and reform, and there too, it was at times valuable to have the OECD's blessing for the political directions underlying the reforms. This was not least the case in Denmark.

The fate of the MRP

In the meantime, the MRP- programme in the Mediterranean countries had come to a standstill. In Portugal, the OECD had formed an alliance with a group of university researchers, which were allowed to study the problems intellectually. However, they were effectively stopped by the Salazar regime the moment their ideas seemed to have political consequences.

In Spain, the contact was established with a reform oriented group within the

Fallangist party - "Opus Dei" - concerned with planning the modernization of the backward Spanish society. The work had few practical consequences under the Franco regime, and when his regime broke down, the Opus Dei was also pushed aside.

In Italy, the point of contact for OECD's manpower planning was an organisation called SVIMEZ, which was generally responsible for regional policy and economic transfers to Southern Italy. The organisation was later on proved to have embezzled most of the money, for the benefit of the coffins of the Christian Democratic Party.

In Greece, the OECD operation was blocked in a stalemate war between the Planning Ministry and the Ministry of Education. Plans were produced, but they disappeared when the colonels came to power a few years later.

In Turkey, a similar war was going on between the Planning Ministry and the Ministry of Education.[3] The collaboration with the OECD led to a higher economic priority for the educational sector, but the plans prepared proved to be rather inappropriate for the real needs of the country.

Yugoslavia came to the conclusion that MRP was bad company. The country decided to leave the MRP and join the EIP- programme.

A professional evaluation of the MRP-programme by the mid 60s gave a devestating criticism of the theoretical

basis for its forecasting activites. The OECD succeeded in selling some elements of the programme in South America, but as a whole the programme was a fiasco, and it gradually faded away.

At the same time, the interest for spreading the gospel of the "new curriculum" died away relatively rapidly in the European member countries. It offered no lasting basis for OECD activities.

The fellowship- programme

A successful initiative was the extensive fellowship- programme in educational planning launched by the OECD. The fellows should specialize in educational planning through field work in member countries and some theoretical training within the secretariat. The first year, there were 500 applicants, and the 20 selected were highly qualified. They, as well as the fellows from later years, were mainly placed in the Mediterranean countries. Few of them came to work in educational planning after the fellowship period, but several have achieved high academic positions later on. Quite a few were also recruited to the OECD secretariat.

Towards the end of the 1960s, the interest in educational planning in member countries declined, and the events of 1968 brought other problems to the forefront of educational policy-making.

The strategy of the Secretariat

In the OECD secretariat, Alexander King did not engage strongly in educational affairs. His interests were primarily in research collaboration. Ron Gass had the good pragmatic sense gradually to recog-

nize where the potential within his domain was to be found. After some years, he came to the conlusion that the only possibility for maintaining an extensive OECD activity within education, was to secure a strong political support from education authorities in the member countries, strong enough to have an influence on the OECD Council. Within the secretariat, I was no longer a real threath, and towards the end of the 1960s, the group of leaders of national planning agencies was abolished. Then Gass could safely take the position as a proponent of educational collaboration based on the premises of national educational policies. This meant that he had to fight against those parts of the secretariat wanting its educational activities primarily to support its work in economic fields, and having difficulties with accepting that OECD should spend large resources on such a peripherical activity as educational collaboration.

The gradual decline in the collaboration on educational planning created, however, problems in defining OECDs role in the education field. The economics of education had fallen somewhat in disrepute, and the sociological approach to democratizing education, through arguments about better utilisation of the potential of youth, was out of fashion. The secretariat tried to pick up the fashion wave of systems theory, and to adapt it to educational planning activities. Fairly soon, however, it became clear that this was a too narrow and mechanistic approach.

However, the country reviews florished, and Hayward brought them to a high quality level, not least through to the choice of brilliant examinors. The examination reports also gained good reputation in professional circles, especially within comparative education. The work of the OECD on educational statistics was continued, and kept a reasonable standard. There was, however, a definite need for new initiatives, but they belong to the 1970s.

The Education Committee and CERI in the 1970s

The Education Committee

In 1970, the OECD finally took the consequence of the actual development of the work of the CSTP- committee: The Committee was transformed into an Education Committee, and was given a new, wider mandate. OECDs work on education policy questions, as recognized by responsible educational authorities in the member countries, was finally accepted as a legitimate task for the Committee.

Reorganising the Secretariat

Somewhat later, a major reorganisation took place within the OECD secretariat. Alexander King retired, and has later on devoted most of his time to The Club of Rome. The secretariat for the Science Policy Committee was combined with the secretariat for the Industry Committee, and parted company with the Education Committee. This was a logical consequence of the firm relationship between the Science Policy Committee and national

bodies responsible for scientific and technical research, mainly oriented towards industry. Attempts by the Nordic countries to turn the committee into a body for general research policy, handling also problems related to the social sciences and fundamental research, have not been successful. This is the main reason why later on, relations between the Science Policy Committee and the Education Committee have been rather sporadic.

A new Directorate for Social Affairs, Manpower and Education was established to serve the Education Committee and the Manpower and Social Affairs Committee. Gass was appointed head of the new directorate, with Papadopoulos as deputy and responsible for the educational activities of the directorate. This location together with labour market policy and social policy has had significant consequences for the Organisation's work in education.

CERI

Towards the end of the 60s, the educational collaboration within the OECD had in a sense run out of central themes which could stir up interest in member countries. It was fairly obvious, however, that further development of the collaboration would require more emphasis on pedagogy and other purely educational issues, for which the secretariat had only limited qualifications. The contact with educational research would have to be strengthened.

Already in 1968, Gass succeeded in obtaining a grant from Ford Foundation

for a pilot experiment with an organisation called Centre for Educational Research and Innovation - CERI. An old friend of Gass, the British sociologist A.H. Halsey, acted as chairman for CERI in the pilot period. The idea caught on, and in 1971, the proposal was made that CERI should be established as a regular institution associated to the OECD. However, this brought out some of the latent conflicts in the OECD collaboration.

Big and small countries

CERI was supposed to have its own budget, based on direct contributions from participating countries. In addition, CERI should be allowed to accept, voluntary contributions from governments, research foundations, etc. Full participation in CERI by all OECD member countries was no condition. Strongly supported by the US, the Secretariat suggested that CERI should have a small governing board, mainly composed of outstanding researchers.

The OECD is an organisation in which, in principle, each country has a vote. The reality is of course quite different. The views of the big countries have greater weight in the Committees, and through informal channels, the dominant OECD countries have strong possibilities for influencing the Secretariat, and also decisions by the OECD Council. The proposed organisation of CERI would mean, in practice, that the larger countries would be secured representation on the governing board, while smaller countries together could only hope to get one or two hostages into the board.

At this occation, it proved possible to organize an alliance between the representatives of the smaller countries in the Education Committee. They claimed that all countries taking part in CERI should also have the right to a place on the board. After long discussions, a compromise agreement was reached: The Governing Board of CERI should have a representative for each of the participating countries. Each country should, however, propose two representatives so that in appointing the Governing Board, the General Secretary could secure a composition balancing the number of "internationally recognized researchers" and "high level administrators". In addition, CERI should have an Executive Group, consisting of 6 members chosen by the Board, and 3 expert members appointed by the General Secretary. Probably, the idea was that the Executive Group should perform the functions initially planned for a small board.

The Executive Group

As the first board chairman of CERI, I established the practice that the Executive Group should only discuss procedural questions and advise the Director in matters within his discression. The Executive Group should not discuss the substance of matters presented to the Governing Board. This meant that membership in the Executive Group became rather uninteresting, and came to rotate rather mechanically between the countries. The three "expert members" of the Executive Group were found among the Board members, and their choice mainly aimed at providing a reasonable geo-

graphical spread in the Executive Group. After my two periods as chairman, this practice had become so well established that it has stayed until today, in spite of attempts by the Secretariat and others to strengthen the position of the Executive Group.

CERI got its own staff, but the leadership was combined with the leadership of the Directorate, so that Gass became director and Papadopoulos deputy director for CERI on part time.

The US cause problems

It soon became clear that all the members of the Education Committee were interested in participation in CERI. However, the US caused some problems in this context. The attitude of the US to the educational collaboration in the OECD has always been marked by an internal struggle between the Department of State and the Department of Education, with the Department of Labour as a third intermittent actor. The different departments often disagree, and it seems somewhat unpredictable which of them will prove strongest in each case. The creation of CERI coincided with a strong wish within the Nixon- administration for reduced US contributions to international organisations. The Department of State had not succeeded on this point in relation to the OECD in general, but it found that CERI might be a kind of backdoor through which the question could be raised again. The Department of Education wanted US participation in CERI, but disliked the way its governing bodies had been organised. The US therefore offered to contribute to individual CERI

projects, in total perhaps up to a quarter of CERI's total expenses, which would correspond to the norm for US contributions to OECD organisations. The US refused, however, to become a member of CERI if their fixed contribution should be at the normal OECD rate.

This led to quite tough negotiations, lasting for several years. The Secretariat was scared, and tended to yield in order to secure US contributions. As Board chairman, I maintained that the US could not claim a special position in influencing what projects should be funded: they would have to accept majority decisions in CERI as in other bodies of the OECD. The ticket for entry would have to be paid according to normal OECD rules. Most of the member countries supported this line, which implied that if necessary, we should run CERI without the US. After a couple of years the US capitulated, and became member on regular conditions.

CERI and the Education Committee

The distribution of functions between CERI and the Education Committee has always been somewhat unclear. In principle, CERI shall be more oriented towards research, and be more free to adopt new ideas. CERI also have the possibility of accepting "voluntary contributions", and this has always meant much for its total budget. In practice, the work of CERI mainly came to focus on synthesizing research done by others. The projects are often "state of the art"- studies in specific fields, a difficult form of research which requires broad competence. At the same time, CERI has been able to

initiate projects in member countries, and to establish networks around such projects.

The Governing Board of CERI actually came to consist of approximately one half researchers and one half top administrators. It is usually regarded as an interesting body, and it has not been diffcult to recruit competent members to the Board. But member countries completely neglect the rule that they should propose two members to the Board, which would have offered the General Secretary a possibility of choice. Most Governing Board members to some extent see themselves as representatives of their governments, even if, in principle, they are appointed "in their personal capacity".

This appointment principle, however, has one important aspect. In the Education Committee, the national delegates are official spokesmen for their governments. This has occationally implied a very strict political control, which peaked in the 1980s, when the US delegates went through every single report looking for formulations "which president Reagan would not like". In CERI, the main criterion for acceptance of a report by the Board is that it brings out interesting material. No single Board member can claim that the conclusions shall coinside with the political views of his government. This has meant that the reports from CERI are often more interesting and professionally solid than reports coming from the Education Committee.

Yet, new delegates to the Education Committee still have difficulties in seeing the difference between CERI and the Committee. The regular practice is that politically interesting reports from CERI shall be presented to the Education Committee for political discussion. However, there seems to be considerable overlapping between the two bodies, and a somewhat accidental division of projects between them. Probably, the two bodies would have been amalgamated long time ago, if it had not been for the fact that their excistence secures more money for educational activities in the OECD.

The OECD Council tends to see the work of the Education Committee and CERI's programme as a whole, and the Council has often found their total budget over-dimensioned compared to the importance educational collaboration ought to have in the OECD. But the funding of CERI outside the regular OECD budget has still made it easier to defend the relatively strong efforts by the Organisation in educational collaboration.

Ministerial meetings

In the 1970s, the Education Committee decided occasionally to meet "at the ministrial level", as is the case with many OECD committees. Such meetings compete for the interest of ministers with corresponding meetings in the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the European Community. The Education Committee wisely decided to hold such meetings at long intervals, usually well ahead of a new five year mandate period for the Education Committee. The ministers are invited to endorse the

ideas of the Education Committee (and the Secretariat) on the work programme for the next period, and to provide it with high level political legitimation, which the Education Committee can use internally in the OECD in its competition for resources with other parts of the Organisation.

Ministerial meetings have high status, and attract interests in other parts of the OECD. The General Secretary normally prefers that the ministers' "communiqué" reflects the role of the OECD as an economic organisation. Sometimes, however, the ministers may react against this, even to the extent that the OECD's official journal once reported from the ministerial meeting in terms of the General Secretary's proposal for a communiqué, and not on the basis of the communiqué actually agreed upon by the ministers.

The youth revolt

The youth revolt in 1968 produced shock-waves throughout the educational systems in all member countries. The OECD secretariat wanted to get in contact with the "revolutionaries", and was open to many of the new ideas which came up. The Educational Committee and the Governing Board of CERI accepted this, perhaps more out of curiosity than genuine sympathy, and there was even a meeting arranged between some of the student leaders and the General Secretary of the OECD.

No far- reaching radicalization of the educational collaboration within the OECD resulted from such contacts, but some of the issues from the heated discussion

early in the 1970s did enter the agenda of the Education Committee and CERI. The Secretariat also recruited some staff with a background as student activists. The sosialization into the climate of an international organisation probably reduced their initial radicalism, but some residuals remained, and was to a limited extent able to flavour the work of the Secretariat.

New themes - lifelong learning

Towards the end of the 1960s, new themes had occured on the agenda of educational policy making, and the OECD picked them up rapidly. Especially in the Nordic countries, there was great interst for "lifelong learning", which in the OECD version was named "recurrent education". CERI initiated extensive research activities in this field, under the leadership of the Swede Jarl Bengtsson. Such activities, which included studies of adult education, the invation of older students in higher education, and the impact on education of structural changes in work life, have stayed with CERI till this day, through shifting political attitudes to the idea of lifelong learning. This has also been an interesting field for collaboration between the Education Committee and the Manpower and Social Affairs Committee.

Social indicators

At the same time, a wave of interest emerged in member countries for "social indicators". Underlying this was the idea that it should be possible to extend the politically effective system of national accounting to a system of data on "the quality of life". The wave created increased efforts in member countries for

better statistics on the living conditions of their populations.

A part of the ideology behind this movement, adopted from national accounting, was a strong focus on "output measures". Statistical data collected previously had mainly reflected "inputs" in social processes; now statistics on "output" should be the main concern. To use the slang of the day, the politicians should become more "result- oriented". A large machinery was built up within the whole of the OECD, in an attempt to define "objectives" for policies in different societal sectors. Also the Education Committee became engaged in this.

The problems in this field proved, however, to be greater than expected, and the theoretical weaknesses of this type of research approach became more visible. For the education sector, nearly 150 goal dimensions were identified, and one was faced with the impossible problem of attaching to each of the goals a form of political weight. In this respect, there were obviously major disagreements, both between countries and within each country. In addition, most goal dimensions were strongly dependent on each other, so that no weighing could take place independent of the level of goal achievement on most other dimensions.

The "solution" was, in this as in similar contexts, to concentrate on a few goal dimensions, pretending that the rest do not exist. This, however, excluded the possiblity of using such data as an instrument for governance, or as a basis

for judging the policy of an individual country. In the end, the whole operation boiled down to a wish to strengthen more traditional statistics on living conditions, and quite limited efforts to improve internationally comparable statistics.

The indicator movement was to some extent related to the US-inspired organisational theories in fashion even in Europe early in the 1970s. The slogan of that time was "programme budgeting".[4] Several OECD committees picked up such ideas and tried to sell them to member countries as an instrument for better public administration. In this round, it did not lead to much, and the Education Committee found the ideas unsuited for complex public activities, such as policy making and administration in education.

Higher education

New structures, management principles and participation in decision making in higher education institutions, and new types of institutions, were the subject of great interest both in the Education Committee and CERI. Under the leadership of Dorotea Furth, the Secretariat was able to present the results of extensive studies on the changed role of the universities, and on new, alternative institutional structures. Knowledge theories and organisational problems connected with interdisciplinarity in education and research were analyzed, "health universities" with integrated education for all categories of health personnel being used as a practical case.

Integration of the handicapped

CERI launched new activities concerned with the education of handicapped children, with special weight on integrating such education into regular schools. The work was inspired by a movement of the time, which found its first political expressions in Italy, soon to be followed by Norway. With Kathleen Kelley as the driving force in the CERI staff, this programme gradually developed into one of the relatively few OECD activities having initiated new policies in several member countries. The programme, which initially had a low status within the Secretariat, got strong support from the Nordic countries, and also in the US, and this manifested itself in a form of considerable "voluntary contributions". It has become one of CERIs success programmes, which in different shapes have continued as a CERI activity till this day.

Innovation theory

CERI also picked up the popular theories of the time on innovation , and initiated an extensive programme for "educational change", in which techniques for change were examined with little reference to the substance of the reforms. The programme, which was named IMTEC, and was based on typical American ideas, was headed by the Norwegian Per Dahlin. It led to a series of well organised conferences in different countries. But the idea that innovation can be analysed independent of their political content, proved rather meaningless, and the IMTEC programme was cut from CERIs agenda.

Country reviews

The country reviews reached perhaps a kind of climax in the exiting examination of the education policy of Japan. As

examinors, Hayward had mobilised great international stars, such as the former French prime minister Edgar Faure, the peace researcher Johan Galtung, and the American expert on Japanese affairs, Reichover. A team like this of ingrained soloists had some problems in playing together, but the examination was still quite an event in the history of the Education Committee.

Intellectually as well as politically, the work of CERI in the 1960s was perhaps more interesting than that of the Education Committee. The Committee tried to obtain a kind of common declaration of educational policy, and left the task to a small working party headed by the German undersecretary Reimut Jochimsen. Even by the mid 70s, it proved possible to prepare a relatively meaningful document of this kind, but probably, it left few traces in the actual policies of member countries.

Changed political climate

The political climate in the OECD changed significantly in the course of the 1970s, and the change became particularly marked towards the end of the decade. The General Secretary of the OECD, the former Danish minister of finance, Torkild Kristensen, leaned somewhat towards conservative politics, but he had a very broad outlook, and was open for innovative thinking in economics as well as in other fields. He was an important supporter in the development of educational collaboration within the OECD. His successor from 1974, the very conservative Dutch economist Emile Van Lennep, was much more narrow in both his

political judgements and his conception of the role of the OECD.

More important, however, was the change from the early 1970s, when the main OECD members had governments with rather different political flavours. Towards the end of the 1970s, the same countries were all dominated by conservative governments. The role of OECD as a kind of uncommitting political think-tank was gradually replaced by the task of legitimating the policies of conservative governments. This was particularly the case in the economics field, while more peripherical sectors of collaboration, such as education, escaped the stricter political control for a while. The more one-sided political orientation of the Organisation also influenced recruitment, and especially the part of the Secretariat dealing with economics was gradually filled with traditional economists oriented towards neo- liberalism. Their main function was not any longer to examine different possible political solutions, but to defend a specific policy, and to impose it upon the more unwilling member contries.

The oil crisis

The oil crisis by the mid 70s was an important underlying factor in this context. The prices of oil, the most fundamental raw material for the running of industrialized countries, increased manifold, sending shock waves through the economies of the Western countries, and ruining many developing countries. In the West, the consequent political struggle focused on who should pay the bill for the increased oil expenditures. In most

countries, the outcome was that the reduction in income was mainly charged to public budgets, and even more to unqualified manpower through extensive unemployment.

Lower priority for education

The education sector got more than its share of budget reductions. Generally, the political priority of education declined, and great innovativeness was shown in order to legitimate this through negative judgements of the importance of education.

For the Education Committee, this also meant budget reductions and less engagement from member countries. On the US' side, the Committee lost the head of the International Bureau of the Department of Education, Robert Liestma, who had been an insightful and constructive supporter of OECD's work in education all through the 60s. The US representation declined in quality, and came partly to consist of people with little international experience and knowledge. This, together with frequent change of representatives, led to a rather passive role for the US in the education activities of the OECD.

The British delegate through many years, the head of the Education Ministry's planning activities, Jack Embling, also disappeared, and his successors had clear orders that their prime task in the OECD was to work for reduced budgets. Even the Western German representation weakened, and their political directives became diffused. The Belgian permanent secretary, Pierre Vanbergen, who had initiated major reforms in the Belgian educational

system, also disappeared from the OECD, and his successors were far less influential.

The Italian representatives to the Education Committee and CERI had relatively loose connections with changing Italian governments, but remained the same through the years. Professor Sette in the Education Committee gradually became its expert on formal procedures, and contributed to keeping the Secretariat in check when they went beyond their mandate. The Italian representative in the governing board of CERI, professor Aldo Visalberghi, is an outstanding social scientist, who could offer valuable professional guidance for CERIs work.

Of the smaller countries, New Zealand was still represented by its eminent permanent secretary, William Renwich, and such countries as Austria and Switzerland gradually made their voices more heard, especially through active researchers on the CERI Governing Board.

Nordic collaboration

The collaboration between the Nordic countries weakened at that time, especially after the change of government in Sweden. Strong representatives, such as the Swedish undersecretary Lennart Sandgren in the Education Committee, and the University Chancellor Hans Löwbeer in CERI, disappeared and the successors lacked political and professional weight. In the 1960s, the Nordic ministers of education had made an agreement on Nordic collaboration in international organisations, and in the case of the OECD the

coordinating function was given to Norway. I had made sure that OECD affairs were discussed between the Nordic representatives before each meeting. The new Swedish delegates were, however, less interested in such discussions in advance, and this form of collaboration faded out in the course of the 70s.

Sweden did not, however, come up with new political signals in education, and the conception of a relatively homogenious Nordic model of educational policy stayed in the OECD. The general political climate of the Organisation made, however, even the Nordic countries more defensive. They deviated from other countries by refusing to accept the idea that public expenditures on education should necessarily by reduced. At the same time, the Nordic countries still pursued a policy of full employment.

My role

My role in the Education Committee, and even more in CERI, was marked by an active professional engagement in the individual projects. I joined reference groups and steering committees for the most interesting projects, and also acted as an expert in my professional capacity. As a consequence, many of the project leaders got into the habit of sending me their project designs and draft reports for critisism and comments. Many of the project leaders found this useful, while others perhaps rather wanted to guard themselves against critisism in the Education Committee or in CERI's Governing Board. I put some effort into this, and became a kind of professional advisor to several of the Secretariat's staff.

I probably brought some projects to a stop, and contributed to the removal of some Secretariat members who were not up to measure. I may have helped others, who had something to give, but met problems in mastering the specific working conditions of an international organisation.

Such activities were undertaken in full openness towards director Gass, who received copies of all correspondence with project leaders. For a while, he was somewhat sceptical about my practice; fear of losing control was always a fundamental feature of his form of leadership. But gradually Gass found my efforts useful, because it clearly contributed to the success of a number of projects. We developed an unspoken agreemet on a division of labour, according to which he used his great tactical gifts in relation to the rest of the OECD secretariat and the member countries, and his remarkable ability to pick up new ideas for possible OECD activities, while I acted as a professional advisor, at the same time maintaining a clear political profile.

This somewhat ambivalent partnership, which developed towards the end of the 60s, lasted for 20 years. It had its conflicts, which could stem from both real differences of view and prestige matters, but we were fully aware that after all, it served both parties well.

Largely, I avoided chairmanship in the two committees except for the first years

of CERI. I served, however, as a member of the Executive Group of CERI consecutively through nearly 20 years, except for a short period as vice- chairman of the Education Committee.[5] For my part, I felt free by not having to represent such bodies to the outside, and politically I was probably too controversal to be a representative of all the member countries.

The Education Committee and CERI in the 1980s

Unemployment

The unemployment - and especially youth unemployment - was a key problem for most OECD countries at the entry to the 1980s. Initially, there was a tendency in many countries to put the blame for unemployment on the education system, which was said not to be sufficiently adapted to the needs of the labour market. The Education Committee put much work into disproving such suggestions, which gradually proved to be unreasonable. Both the Education Committee and CERI developed extensive projects concerning the transition from education to work, the interplay between education and labour market policy, the "youth guarantee" of the Nordic countries, etc.

Flight from education

Especially CERI was marked by what I called "the flight from education". OECD's educational activities had always emphasized the interplay between education policy, economic policy, labour market policy and social policy. This emphasis was now reinforced, so that its specific educational problems nearly dis-

appeared from the programme.

Gass, who was also responsible for the Manpower Committee, encouraged such a development. He would have liked CERI to become a joint research body for the whole "social" sector wihtin the OECD. I went strongly against this, which in my view would imply an unwanted dispersion of the limited resources of CERI. It would also create confused relations to national authorities, with small possibilities for real national control with CERI's activities. Discussions about changes of the CERI mandate in the direction wanted by Gass continued for several years, but in the end he had to drop this initiative.

Probably the most interesting work by CERI in this field in the 1980s was its programme on structural changes in work life and their consequences for education, not least in quality terms. This also meant that the OECD maintained an interest in adult education, which otherwise had become a low priority area in many member countries, and it also kept alive the ideas about lifelong learning.

Equality

Equality issues in education, which had played a major role in previous OECD work, had no high standing in the political climate of the 80s. But CERI maintained its interest for the situation of the handicapped. As to equality between the sexes, the Education Committee was for a long time rather disinterested. Active efforts in this field within the Manpower Committee, and pressure especially from the Nordic countries,

finally forced the Committee to take gender equality in education seriously.

Educational technology

Educational technology had become fashionable, and CERI engaged in an extensive project on computers in education. From an enthusiastic start, this project developed into a fairly sober evaluation of the developments in this field, and contributed to a clarification of the premises for successful policies in this new area.

Immigrants

A pressing problem for many member countries was the large number of immigrants, and the stream of immigrant children into the education system. At the same time, indigeneous ethnic minorities claimed a voice in education in several member countries. CERI tried to handle the two problems as two aspects of the same issue, but the position of ethnic minority groups with a long history in certain countries proved to be a too sensitive topic for international examination. Multi- cultural education for immigrants was somewhat easier to handle. But consequent reports clearly showed that the willingness to face such problems through active political efforts were limited in the member countries.

School reforms

As a reaction against the "flight from education", the Netherlands initiated a decentralised project on "school improvement"- ISIP (the concept of "reform" was no longer popular). Many countries joined a network developed under the auspices of CERI. It was more anchored in practical educational administration than in education research, and it led to a series

of reports offering guidance in practical educational matters. However, after some years the project got the appearance of an international club, certainly enjoyed by the members, but without the ability to produce new insight or reports of high professional quality, and the network was finally disolved.

Comparative analyses

A number of analytic projects were conducted by the Education Committee during the 80s. The first one concerned basic education, resulting in a valuable comparative analyses of the problems in 3-4 selected member countries. The next concerned upper secondary education, also leading to an interesting comparative analysis. Finally, a series of studies in higher education, as a follow-up to the studies undertaken a decade before, produced extensive material of great interest, through its description of developments over time, and its analysis of current tendencies. Within the secretariat, Dorotea Furth was responsible for most of this work.

The "quality" agitation

For a long time, both the Education Committee and CERI kept some distance to the popular slogan of the time - "quality" in education. Most of the members were aware that "quality" has no objective measure, the quality concept must be seen in relation to the aims of educational policy. The representatives also reacted negatively towards the specific political content which became associated with "quality".

By the mid 1980s, however, a considerable pressure was built up by the US in order

to make "quality" a main topic for OECD work. The pressure was so strong that both the Education Committee and CERI yielded to some extent. This led to a valuable theoretical discussion of the concept of quality, which intellectually killed "quality" as a political slogan. But this could not, of course, prevent the slogan from being used as long as it seems capable of winning votes.

The quality debate was followed up by studies of the conditions of teachers and teacher training, offering a rather sober evaluation of the situation in member countries.

Indicators

The US representatives had more success in selling their ideas about evaluation and indicators in the educational sector. This caught the interest of several member countries, and resulted in CERI work with exchange of experience on national indicators, and in the Education Committee on the possible extension of its system of comparative statistics. The lessons from the work on social indicators in the 1970s were forgotten, and we got a new round of activity with no theoretical foundation. The experience in some countries gradually proved that governance through statistical indicators is a rather primitive form of policy making, and that strengthening the qualitative information basis for policy decisions would be a more meaningful objective. However, the work of the OECD on comparative statistics, somewhat neglected over the years, was vitalized.

A side branch of this activity was

undertaken by IMHE, a "satelite" to CERI based on collaboration between university administrators in the member countries. This activity had lived its own life for many years, strongly dominated by American management ideas, and with great faith in the need for a dominant role for administrators within universities.

US political pressure

By the mid 80s, the US changed its role in the educational collaboration of the OECD from passivity to agressive missionary activities, characterized by "fight against communism" and religious fundamentalism. In the eyes of the new US delegates, Western Europe mainly consisted of semi-communist countries, and the Nordic countries were definitely behind the iron curtain. This policy was pursued with a strong power language, attacks upon the education sector within the OECD Council, and threats to withdraw from CERI.

Such political strong arm methods created, both in the Education Committee and CERI, a common front of all the other countries against the US. An unwritten rule of international collaboration implies that if you want to have your high priority activities accepted, you also have to accept that others have their favorite activities. The US delegates broke this rule, and met massive resistance from the other countries. The Secretariat was scared, and rhetorically, both OECD bodies yielded somewhat, but in reality the strong US pressure had few results.

New national constellations

Western Germany and France became more active, and in spite of conservative governments, they marked a clear distance from the educational policy thinking dominating the US and UK governments. Equally interesting was a more active engagement by the Mediterranean countries. They had since long played a modest role, just occasionally indicating that the issues discussed by the OECD did not correspond too well to their national problems. The democratic development in Portugal, Spain and Greece caused a more active attitude towards education policy, with "democratisation" as the main catch-word. The quality discussion in the rest of the West was not seen as interesting in the Mediterranean countries. The new political forces coming to the forefront in these countries did not see the educational systems of the UK, Western Germany or France as desirable models, and certainly not the US system in Reagan's version. For the Mediterranean countries, the "Nordic model" emerged clearly as more of an ideal for educational policy.

Japan also made its weight more felt, after a long period of observation and learning. The Japanese school system, strongly admired in the West because of the test achievements of the pupils, was seen by the Japanese themselves as a blind alley. Towards the end of the 80s major reforms were initiated, and the underlying ideas deviated strongly from educational ideas predominant at that time in other larger OECD countries.

The Nordic countries played at more

defensive role in the political climate dominating the OECD in the 1980s. Towards the end of the decade, Denmark actually parted from the Nordic family in terms of its educational policies. Its minister of education came out as an extreme neo-liberalist, and more of a Thatcherit than Thatcher herself, and as their representation in the Education Committee followed such signals, Denmark at least rhetorically distanced itself from the Nordic model. This, as well as the other developments referred to, have strongly reduced the influence of the Nordic countries in the education work of the OECD, compared to the 1960s and 70s.

What Next?

Education and economic growth

In a major conference towards the end of the 1980s, the OECD raised again the question of education and economic growth. This stirred up considerable interest in member countries, and a number of ministers took part. In this area, as in so many other fields, we experience a rennaissance of the ideas from the early 1960s. The education sector is once more on the political agenda in the member countries, and especially because one has "rediscovered" the economic importance of education. This has also contributed to a higher priority for education within the OECD.

The 80s have come to an end

At the same time, there are clear indications of a major turn of the currents in educational policy in leading OECD member countries. The educational reforms in Japan have already been mentioned. In

the US, the Republicans were blamed for stealing the educational platform of the Democrats before the election in the autumn 1988. The emphasis is now again on education for ethnic minorities and other underprivileged groups, in order to bring them fully into the "mainstream of American society". The official representatives of Western Germany and France declare the "quality debate" to be dead. The important issue now is how to avoid becoming a "2/3- society" - a society in which a large part of the population falls off the track in school, and later on in the economy. For the traditional school systems in those countries, this means a fundamental reorientation.

Teaching based on collaboration between pupils, encouragement of initiative, and unconventional pedagogical forms is in focus, replacing the quests for more discipline, competition, strict evaluation and consentration on academic disciplines. Especially the environmental problems, which open up for a project oriented approach to a series of school subjects, is in the forefront. Even in the United Kingdom, there is much talk about the schools developing the "entrepreneurial spirit", and not the traditional passive reception of factual knowledge.

Progressive education once more

Such tendencies bring back associations with the old ideas about "progressive education", and they are well in line with the education policy directions pursued by the Nordic countries all the time.

The emergence of such political signals from countries with conservative governments, is probably due to pressure from the economy. Representatives of the economy are in fact less concerned with an academically oriented discussion of "quality". They want to recruit people from the eduation system capable of team work and creative thinking. Furthermore, if a large part of youth is only able to function marginally in relation to the school and to work life, this constitute such a burden on the economy that ideological concerns have to yield.

Seen toghether with the more expansive tendencies in the Mediterranean countries, this should create conditions for a fruitful interplay with the ideas underlying "the Nordic model".

New challenges

The OECD as a whole is faced with new challenges. The organisation has for the time being found its role in relation to the European Community, primarily as a link between industralized countries inside and outside Europe. Less political control, and less faith in specific economic/political ideologies, has also brought back the idea of the OECD as a professional/political "think-tank". The new General Secretary of the OECD as from 1984, Jean Claude Paye, seems more open for such a development, which will, however, require new recruitments to replace much of the staff dominating the Organisation today.

An extension of OECD's geographical range is also on the agenda. Partly, this

concerns the newly developed countries in the third world, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea. In international trade such countries are still treated as developing countries, while they, according to the OECD, now have the economic strength to enter the same commitments as the industralized countries. The countries themselves are strongly interested in membership in "the rich man's club".

Even more challenging are the new signals from Eastern Europe. The interest in closer contact is very strong in those countries. For them, the European Community is an essential negotiation partner, and the Council of Europe an interesting forum for general political debate, at least of significant symbolic value. The OECD, however, opens for contacts beyond Europe, and for professional and technical discussions of great interest to the Eastern European countries. This opens far-reaching perspectives for the future work of the OECD.

Education is one of the fields in which collaboration beyond the present OECD area can be established with few political complications. The question may be whether the OECD secretariat on the education side is capable today of following up the possibilities created by changes in education policy in the member countries, and the possible extension of the Organisation's international contacts. This is partly a question of individuals.

The Secretariat

Director Gass retired from his position in March 1989 after 30 years of service. His rich initiative and thorough knowledge of the OECD made him a very effective proponent of the interests of the Organisation's "social" sectors, and education policy was close to his heart. His policies were always pragmatic, but he maintained a sense for the social dimensions of educational policy- making, and never fell for the temptation to see education as a purely economic concern.

His successor, Thomas Alexander from the UK, came from the position as Head of the General Secretary's Cabinet. He has no particular professional qualifications for work in his present directorate, which breaks an established recruitment tradition in the OECD. Politically, he is assumed to reflect attitudes from the 1980s, which may not be equally central in the 1990s.

Gass' deputy, with special responsibility for education collaboration, George Papadopoulos, will leave in 1990, and speculations about his successor are florishing. Diplomatic manoeuvering may easily bring a right wing candidate into this position too.

At the same time, the chairmanship both in the Education Committee and in the Governing Board of CERI is currently held by rather conservative members, deeply ingrained in thinking of the 1980s. In a transitional phase, without a strong leadership in the Secretariat, this may have far-reaching consequences. The ministerial meeting in the autumn 1990 is

important in this context. The outcome of the political struggle about the preparations of the ministerial meeting and its proposed "communiqué" is quite uncertain.

Will the OECD fall off the track?

At the 10th anniversery of CERI, I said in an adress that the OECD in the education field has shown a remarkable ability in consistently raising the right questions. But I had to add that the Organisation also usually came up with the wrong answers. There is, in the present situation, a strong possibility that in the 1990s, the OECD will both raise the wrong questions and provide the wrong answers in the field of education,- as to a great extent has been the case with the Organisation's economic expertice during the last 10-15 years.

It will need a conscious effort by the representatives of many countries to prevent the OECD from declining into an organisation of secondary importance in the field of education policy in the years ahead, and especially in view of the expanding activities of the European Community. The Nordic countries can do much in this context, and maybe even Denmark can be brought back to the Nordic familiy in the context of education policy. "The Nordic model" has not ceased to function as a desireable goal for many countries. However, the strong Nordic influence on the educational work of the OECD from the early 1960s and through most of the 70s, will hardly be seen again.

NOTES:

1) From 1961 Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel - CSTP.

2) I was also asked to be in charge of the secretariat's emerging activities in the field of science policy, but after 10 years of work in that field in my own country, I felt rather fed up with it, and refused.

3) When around 1970, I worked in Turkey, I found that the two ministries had not had any contact, in written or oral form, for three years. This was rather troublesome, as the Planning Ministry was responsible for all investments, and the Ministry of Education for the running costs of the educational system.

4) Fifteen years later we have met the same organisational philosophy under the name of "management by objectives".

5) Several countries had the same representative in the Education Committee and CERI, but it was an established rule that the same person should not simultaneously be on the Executive Group of CERI and in the Bureau of the Education Committee.